

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

DIVISION: General Administration
SUBJECT: Reporting Sanitary
Sewer Overflows in Anne
Arundel County

I. PURPOSE

To clarify the procedure for notification, response, and public notification in the event of a Sanitary Sewer Overflow.ⁱ

II. AUTHORITY

The Anne Arundel County Code, Article 13, Title 5 grants the Department of Public Works (DPW), Bureau of Utility Operations legal authority and responsibility for the Wastewater Utility Systems in the county. This includes responsibility for the operation, maintenance, inspection, repair, and testing of the Water Reclamation Facilities and all related functions of the Collection and Conveyance System. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.08.01, .02, .03, .04, .05, .06, .07, .08, .09, .10, .11, establishes definitions, reporting requirements, public notification requirements, and related responsibilities for owners/operators of public sanitary sewer systems regarding overflows.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Department of Public Works (DPW) Utility Operations (UO) Utility Administrators, Superintendents, Team Managers and Supervisors
- B. Department of Health, Environmental Health Division (DOH)
- C. Department of Health Public Information Officer (PIO)
- D. DPW Public Information Officer (PIO) (a.k.a. DPW Customer Relations Manager)
- E. DPW Utility Operations Public Service Dispatch Personnel
- F. DPW Emergency Services Personnel
- G. Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- H. Utility Operations (UO) Collections Personnel
- I. Utility Operations (UO) Water Reclamation and Pumping Station Personnel
- J. The County Executive's Community and Constituent Services (C&CS) Personnel

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Affected Area** – the entire geographic area exposed to the overflow, including but not limited to any recreational bathing or shellfish harvesting waterway.

B. Spill Area - the immediate land area where the actual sewage spill occurred.

C. Approving Authority - Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works

D. Sewage Overflow - any loss of wastewater or discharge from a sanitary sewer system or wastewater treatment plant bypass which results in the direct discharge of raw or diluted sewage onto the surface of the ground, into waterways, storm drains, ditches, or which impacts ground or surface waters of the State. In accordance with MDE regulation, overflow does not include:

1. An overflow or discharge of 50 gallons or less to the ground that is cleaned up within one hour of its occurrence; and
2. An overflow or discharge to impervious surfaces that is effectively contained and cleaned up so that there is no direct or potential pollution of waters of the State as a result of the overflow or discharge.

E. Sewage Overflow Categories

1. **Large sewage overflow event** - the potential risk of exposure and level of health threat is considered high when a sewage overflow from a sewer collection system, force main, pumping station, or wastewater treatment plant is greater than 10,000 gallons.
2. **Medium sewage overflow event** - the potential risk of exposure and level of health threat is considered moderate when the amount of discharge is fewer than 10,000 gallons.
3. **Small sewage overflow event** - a sewage overflow of fewer than 10,000 gallons from a sewer collection, force main, pumping station, or wastewater treatment plant and:
 - a. The size or extent of the sewage overflow impacts only a small portion of the receiving water;

- b. The potential for dilution and dispersal of the sewage overflow in the receiving water is high due to tidal action; or
- c. The risk of exposure and level of health threat is minimal due to the season of the year (i.e., winter).

- 4. **Minor sewage overflow event** – a sewage overflow of fewer than 2,000 gallons from a sewer collection, force main, pumping station, or wastewater treatment plant and:
 - a. The size or extent of the sewage overflow impacts only a small portion of the receiving water;
 - b. The potential for dilution and dispersal of the sewage overflow in the receiving water is high due to tidal action; or
 - c. The risk of exposure and level of health threat is minimal due to the season of the year (i.e., winter).

F. Department of Health 24 hour Phone Number to report SSOs—443-481-3140

G. Department of Public Works 24 hour Phone Number—410-222-8400

V. POLICY

DPW and DOH personnel shall follow the procedures outlined in this policy in notifying department personnel, other affected county personnel, the Department of Health, the public, and the MDE regarding sanitary sewage overflows and their impact.

VI. PROCEDURES

A. INITIAL NOTIFICATION

The DPW Public Service Dispatch Unit shall be advised of any sanitary sewage discharge/overflow by anyone with knowledge of or reporting such an occurrence. Notification shall be made by calling (410) 222-8400.

B. INVESTIGATIONS

1. **Collection System Infrastructure** – When the Public Service Dispatch Unit is advised of any Sanitary Sewage Discharge/Overflow, the following sequence of events will occur.
 - a. Once the Public Service Dispatch Unit is aware of a potential raw sewage discharge within the collection system, Emergency Services personnel are directed to respond to the site where applicable to evaluate and correct the problem if possible.
 - b. If the problem is an overflowing cleanout on the private homeowner's side, the homeowner will be notified by Emergency Services that it is the homeowner's responsibility to mitigate the overflow. Emergency Services will advise the Health Department. If the overflow was caused by a blockage on the public side and can be corrected by Emergency Services, personnel will stabilize the area, remove any debris while correcting the problem, and advise the Health Department of the situation and MDE of the situation in accordance with the regulation.
 - c. If Emergency Services Personnel are unable to correct the problem, they will contact the Public Service Dispatch Unit who will call in additional personnel as needed to further assess the discharge (e.g., Sewer Line Repair Crews or Vactor Crews). The Public Service Dispatch Unit will then notify the Collection System Superintendent/Supervisor/Utility Administrator apprising them of the problem and circumstances.
 - d. Once the Collection System Superintendent/Supervisor/Utility Administrator has been advised of and evaluated the situation, the Public Service Dispatch Unit shall initiate telephone notifications. Telephone notifications shall be made as soon as practicable to the DOH, MDE and the DPW PIO, but not later than 24 hours after Utility Operations becomes aware of the event.
 - e. **Note: The goal is to provide the DOH a preliminary estimate of spill size within four hours once Utility Operations becomes aware of the notification of the spill.**

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- f. Telephone Reports shall include:
- i. Location of overflow, including information that is as specific as possible
 - ii. Identification of owner/operator
 - iii. Name of receiving water, if applicable, and if known, whether the receiving water is designated as shellfish waters or for public drinking water supply
 - iv. Volume discharged based on actual measurement or as an estimate using best professional judgment.
 - v. Description of sewer system/treatment plant component from which the overflow was released, i.e., manhole, cracked pipe, pumping station wet well, constructed overflow pipe, etc.
 - vi. Description of type of system – separate sanitary sewer system, treatment plant, etc.
 - vii. Detailed description of visual observations and preliminary assessment of the overflow's actual or potential impact upon waters of the State
 - viii. Cause of suspected overflow
 - ix. Date and time when the overflow began and stopped or, if not stopped, the date and time the overflow is expected to be stopped
 - x. Steps taken or planned to reduce, eliminate, and prevent recurrence of the overflow and a time schedule for completion of steps
 - xi. Measures taken or planned to mitigate the adverse impact of the overflow and a time schedule for implementation of measures
 - xii. Whether the public has been notified, who performed the notification, the media used, and the content of the message.

2. **Water Reclamation Facilities (WRF) and Pumping Stations (PS)**

Once the Public Service Dispatch Unit is aware of a potential raw sewage discharge at a WRF or PS, the following sequence of events will occur.

- a. The Public Service Dispatcher will contact the appropriate facility personnel to investigate the problem.

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- b. Once the appropriate facility personnel have been sent out and investigated the problem, they will take corrective action or call in additional personnel as needed, and request the Dispatcher notify the Service Area Team Leader/Utility Administrator, apprising them of the problem and circumstances. Dispatch will then place a preliminary call to the DOH, advising them of the potential problem.
 - c. Once the Service Area Team Leader or Utility Administrator has been advised of and evaluated the situation, the Public Service Dispatch Unit shall initiate telephone notifications. Telephone notifications shall be made as soon as practicable to the DOH, MDE and the DPW PIO, but not later than 24 hours after Utility Operations becomes aware of the event.
 - d. **Note: The goal is to provide the Health Department a preliminary estimate of spill size within four hours once Utility Operations becomes aware of the notification of the spill.**
 - e. Telephone Reports shall include:
 - i. Location of overflow, including information that is as specific as possible
 - ii. Identification of owner/operator
 - iii. Name of receiving water, if applicable, and if known, whether the receiving water is designated as shellfish waters or for public drinking water supply
 - iv. Volume discharged based on actual measurement or as an estimate using best professional judgment.
 - v. Description of sewer system/treatment plant component from which the overflow was released, i.e., manhole, cracked pipe, pumping station wet well, constructed overflow pipe, etc.
 - vi. Description of type of system – separate sanitary sewer system, treatment plant, etc.
 - vii. Detailed description of visual observations and preliminary assessment of the overflow's actual or potential impact upon waters of the State
 - viii. Cause of suspected overflow
 - ix. Date and time when the overflow began and stopped or, if not stopped, the date and time the overflow is expected to be stopped

- x. Steps taken or planned to reduce, eliminate, and prevent recurrence of the overflow and a time schedule for completion of steps
- xi. Measures taken or planned to mitigate the adverse impact of the overflow and a time schedule for implementation of measures
- xii. Whether the public has been notified, who performed the notification, the media used, and the content of the message.

C. PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

1. Utility Operations Responsibilities

- a. Telephone Notification: The Public Service Dispatch Unit shall initiate public notification by contacting the DOH and the DPW PIO, as described in the previous telephone reporting section.
- b. The Utility Administrator/Superintendent/Supervisor or his designee shall post the spill areas unless otherwise directed by the DOH, if it is determined that:
 - i. There is an immediate threat of human contact with contaminated water or ground where the overflow occurred.
 - ii. The size and flow rate of the water body into which the discharge entered are such that the discharge constitutes a significant portion of the flow.
 - iii. The potential for dilution and dispersal of the overflow into the receiving waters is minimal due to the season of the year, the period of time of the actual discharge, or the receiving water is already listed as impaired due to non-attainment of State bacteriological water quality standards.
 - iv. The concentration of effluent increases the risk to public health.
- c. The Utility Administrator/Superintendent/Supervisor or his designee shall notify schools, daycare centers, hospitals, camps, immediately impacted property owners, or similar establishments or locations with potentially sensitive populations that may be subject to exposure in the immediate area of the overflow as soon as possible.

- d. Where drinking water supplies have been impacted or have the potential to be impacted by the sewage overflow, the Utility Administrator/Superintendent/Supervisor is required to notify individual property owners and provide potable drinking water until bacteriological conditions meet acceptable standards.

2. Health Department Responsibilities

a. Large Spills

In the event a sewage overflow of more than 10,000 gallons impacts recreational, swimming, or shellfish harvesting waters, the DOH will issue an emergency closing for the affected bathing beaches and recreational waters. The following procedure shall be implemented in notifying the general public of the public health risks associated with the sewage overflow.

- i. **Posting of Signs**
The DOH, Environmental Health Division, will post emergency closing notices at the affected community beaches, community beach access points, and along the roadside leading into and out of the affected communities. A minimum of four (4) signs will be posted along the roadside for each of the affected communities. At least one (1) sign will be posted at the entrance to the community beach and a minimum of two (2) signs will be posted in the community beach bathing area.

DPW will post overflow signs in the spill area.
- ii. **Media Release**
The DOH PIO, will issue a media release in the coordination with the DPW PIO concerning the emergency closing. A separate media release will be issued when the emergency closing has been lifted.
- iii. **Notification to Community Groups**

The DOH PIO will notify the DPW PIO of the emergency closing. The DPW PIO will be responsible to notify the appropriate C&CS representative of the emergency closing. The C&CS representative is responsible to notify the appropriate community leaders, community association presidents, and community interest groups. Postcards concerning the emergency closing will be made available to the C&CS representative by the DOH in the event the affected community leaders, community association presidents, and community interest groups agree to distribute information within the affected area. A separate notification will be made when the emergency closing has been lifted.

iv.

Website

The DOH PIO, will post the emergency closing information on the Department's website. The website will be updated to state the following: "Effective (date), the Department of Health has issued an emergency closing for (creek name) due to a sewage spill. The affected bathing beaches and recreational waters are closed for swimming, water-skiing, and other direct water contact. The emergency closing is in effect until follow-up water testing shows water quality conditions are acceptable."

v.

Water Quality Phone Line

The DOH will update the emergency closing information on the water quality phone line. The water quality phone line will be updated to state the following: "Effective (date), the Department of Health has issued an emergency closing for (creek name) due to a sewage spill. The affected bathing beaches and recreational waters are closed for swimming, water-skiing, and other direct water contact. The emergency closing is in effect until follow-up water

- testing shows water quality conditions are acceptable.”
- vi. Environment Notification to Maryland Department of the
The DOH, will notify MDE, Technical and Regulatory Services Administration of the emergency closing.
 - vii. Drinking Water
Where drinking water supplies have been impacted or have the potential to be impacted by the sewage overflow, the Department of Public Works is required to notify individual property owners and provide potable drinking water until bacteriological conditions meet acceptable standards.
 - viii. The Department of Health will update the Department of Public Works on the status of public notification actions taken by the Department of Health in response to the emergency closing.
- b. **Medium Spills** or Where Enterococci Levels Exceed the Acceptable Standard
In the event a sewage spill of less than 10,000 gallons impacts recreational, swimming, or shellfish harvesting waters, or where water quality results indicate enterococci counts exceed the acceptable standard, the Department of Health will issue a public health advisory for the affected bathing beaches and recreational waters. The following procedure shall be implemented in notifying the general public of the public health risks associated with the sewage overflow or where high enterococci levels are found.
 - i. Posting of Signs
The DOH will post emergency closing notices at the affected community beaches, community beach access points, and along the roadside leading into and out of the affected communities. A minimum of four (4) signs will be posted along the roadside for each of the affected communities. At least one (1)

sign will be posted at the entrance to the community beach and a minimum of two (2) signs will be posted in the community beach bathing area.

DPW will post overflow signs in the spill area.

- ii. **Media Release**
The DOH PIO will issue a media release in the coordination with the DPW Public Information Officer concerning the emergency closing. A separate media release will be issued when the emergency closing has been lifted.
- iii. **Notification to Community Groups**
The DOH PIO will notify the DPW PIO of the emergency closing. The DPW PIO will be responsible to notify the appropriate C&CS representative of the emergency closing. The C&CS representative is responsible to notify the appropriate community leaders, community association presidents, and community interest groups. Postcards concerning the emergency closing will be made available to the C&CS representative by the DOH in the event the affected community leaders, community association presidents, and community interest groups agree to distribute information within the affected area. A separate notification will be made when the emergency closing has been lifted.
- iv. **Website**
The DOH PIO will post the emergency closing information on the Department's website. The website will be updated to state the following:
"Effective (date), the Department of Health has issued an emergency closing for (creek name) due to a sewage spill. The affected bathing beaches and recreational waters are closed for swimming, water-skiing, and other direct water contact. The emergency closing is in effect until follow-up water

testing shows water quality conditions are acceptable.”

- v. **Water Quality Phone Line**
The DOH will update the emergency closing information on the water quality phone line. The water quality phone line will be updated to state the following:
“Effective (date), the Department of Health has issued an emergency closing for (creek name) due to a sewage spill. The affected bathing beaches and recreational waters are closed for swimming, water-skiing, and other direct water contact. The emergency closing is in effect until follow-up water testing shows water quality conditions are acceptable.”
- vi. **Notification to the Maryland Department of the Environment**
The DOH, will notify the MDE Technical and Regulatory Services Administration of the emergency closing.
- vii. **Drinking Water**
Where drinking water supplies have been impacted or have the potential to be impacted by the sewage overflow, the Department of Public Works is required to notify individual property owners and provide potable drinking water until bacteriological conditions meet acceptable standards.
- viii. **The Department of Health will update the Department of Public Works on the status of public notification actions taken by the Department of Health in response to the emergency closing.**

c. Small Spills Impacting Waterways

In the event a small sewage spill impacts recreational, swimming, or shellfish harvesting waters, the Department of Health will implement the following procedure in

notifying the general public of the public health risks associated with the sewage overflow.

- i. Posting of signs
The DOH, will assure overflow signs have been posted by DPW in the spill area. Where drinking water supplies have been impacted or have the potential to be impacted by the sewage overflow, DPW is required to notify individual property owners and provide potable drinking water until bacteriological conditions meet acceptable standards.
- ii. Website
The DOH PIO will post the emergency closing information on the Department's website. The website will be updated to state the following: "Effective (date), the Department of Health has issued an emergency closing for (creek name) due to a sewage spill. The affected bathing beaches and recreational waters are closed for swimming, water-skiing, and other direct water contact. The emergency closing is in effect until follow-up water testing shows water quality conditions are acceptable."
- iii. Water Quality Phone Line
The DOH will update the emergency closing information on the water quality phone line. The water quality phone line will be updated to state the following: "On (date), the Department of Health completed an assessment of (creek name) in response to a sewage spill. The Department of Health has determined there are no public health risks associated with the sewage spill. There are no restrictions on swimming, water-skiing or other direct water contact for (creek name)."

d. Small Spills that Do Not Impact Receiving Waters

Public notification actions are not required by the DOH for small spills or where swimming, recreational, or shellfish harvesting waters are not affected by a small spill.

- i. Posting of Signs
DPW will post overflow signs in the spill area.
- ii. Drinking Water
Where drinking water supplies have been impacted or have the potential to be impacted by the sewage overflow, DPW is required to notify individual property owners and provide potable drinking water until bacteriological conditions meet acceptable standards.

3. DPW (PIO) Responsibilities

If the total volume of the overflow at the time of the completed repair as measured or estimated is 10,000 gallons or greater, the DPW PIO shall notify the public by announcement or paid advertising in a daily newspaper, radio station, or television station serving the immediate area where the overflow occurred and any other areas where the overflow is likely to have an adverse impact. *The Utility Administrator (or the designee) shall be responsible for notifying the DPW PIO who will make notification to the media in compliance with this section.*

The DPW Public Information Officer shall also notify

- Community and Constituent Services

If circumstances warrant:

- County Webmaster
- County Cable TV Administrator

Once notified, it shall be the responsibility of C&CS to notify the appropriate community leaders.

D. INTERNAL CHECKS & BALANCES

It is the responsibility of the DPW BUO Emergency Services Manager to review the Public Dispatch Unit's work log on a daily

basis and confirm that notification for all SSO's was done in accordance with this policy.

E. WRITTEN REPORTS

Utility Operations is responsible for the following:

Within five (5) calendar days after the telephone notification of the event, Utility Operations Utility Administrator (Wastewater) for Water Reclamation Facility and Sewage Pumping Station events and the Utility Operations Utility Administrator (Infrastructure) for all other events shall provide MDE and the DOH a written report that includes at a minimum the information listed as required in the telephone report, unless the MDE waives the requirement for a written report due to the small volume of the overflow. The written report shall be directed to the mailing address provided by MDE. In addition to the MDE and the DOH, the Utility Administrator shall ensure the signed report is distributed to:

- County Executive
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Director, DPW
- DPW Assistant Director
- DPW Deputy Director, Utility Operations Community and Constituent Services
- DPW PIO
- Utility Administrator Wastewater
- Utility Administrator, Infrastructure
- Technical Support Programs Administrator
- File

It is important that thorough, accurate records are maintained in the Bureau's central file. Utility Administrators shall be responsible for assuring that all correspondence and documentation regarding specific incidents are stapled to and filed with the spill report. This should include documentation of all follow-up investigations, initiated and completed work orders resulting from the incident, capital projects planned to resolve

deficiencies that have caused spills, and any other similar information.

It is also the Utility Administrator's responsibility to ensure that the Collection System Discharge Report Form is completed and submitted to MDE within five (5) days of the discovery of the spill and to periodically check the MDE Website to ensure any on-line data regarding overflow is correct.

VII. REFERENCES

- A. Department of Health Administrative Policy and Procedure, Identifier EH-HFPS-05-001: Public Notification Procedures for Issuing Emergency Closings and Public Health Advisories
- B. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)26.08.01, .02, .03, .04, .05, .06, .07, .08, .09, .10, .11
- C. Anne Arundel County Code, Article 13, Title 5

i Note: This policy was originally numbered DPW U2-8.